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SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE: REFORM OF THE COMMITTEE ON WORLD FOOD SECURITY

REF: A. USUN 41 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. USUN 25 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. USUN 17 (NOTAL)
[1](#)D. STATE 14025 (NOTAL)
[1](#)E. USUN 9 (NOTAL)
[1](#)F. 08 USUN 86 (NOTAL)

[1](#)1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

[1](#)2. This is an action request; please see paragraphs four, six, and eight.

Summary

[1](#)3. (SBU) Amidst an intensified focus on food and agricultural issues due to rising global hunger and malnutrition rates, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) is undergoing a member-led overhaul intended to enhance its stature and effectiveness in confronting food insecurity. The Committee, begun in 1974 (see Reftels for background), will hold its annual meeting at the FAO in October with reform the key item on its agenda. Over the past months, FAO member countries, UN staff, civil society representatives and others have engaged in laborious negotiations aimed at reaching consensus on the role for CFS, centered on a draft working document to be presented in October, and currently near completion. A meeting of this "Contact Group" is scheduled to meet on September 4 in Rome to try to finalize its working paper to present at the October CFS session.

¶4. (SBU) From the start, USUN Rome has actively engaged in these talks, including chairing a working group to address a proposal to launch a "high level panel of experts" attached to the CFS - a French idea now championed by FAO DG Diouf. Nevertheless, the process has been dominated by GRULAC and FAO interests, overambitious near-term deliverables, and a possible negative impact on efforts of both the UN High Level Task Force (HLTF) and the USG's own emerging food security strategy. (ACTION REQUEST) Mission requests guidance via cable on several key issues at the heart of the reform debate to ensure consistency and compatibility with U.S. interests. In addition, the Mission recommends engagement with key capitals (e.g., London, Paris, Brasilia, Beijing, Cairo, Moscow, New Delhi, Pretoria) to further define the relationship of the CFSW with the Global Partnership on Agriculture and Food Security (GPAFS). A consistent concern we hear in Rome from G-77 diplomats and others is that G-8 and U.S. efforts are inconsistent with a multilateral approach to food security - despite repeated assurances to the contrary. In the absence of any clear definition of what GPAFS means in practice to individual countries and regions, our efforts to build trust fall largely on deaf ears, while others continue to shape the landscape on global food security strategies. End summary.

CFS Reform - Starved For Attention

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¶5. (SBU) At its last session in October 2008, recognizing recommendations of FAO's Independent External Evaluation, Members were unanimous in their agreement that CFS required significant reform to ensure relevancy and effectiveness in light of worsening global hunger and malnutrition rates. Spurred on by commodity price shocks of 2007-8, and consistent with efforts elsewhere in the international diplomatic arena to address agricultural production, trade flows, market speculation, climate change, and other issues affecting food consumption and distribution patterns, members agreed to put reform front and center during the 2009 CFS session (see refs X/Y/Z). Despite efforts by USUN Rome and like-minded representatives within the "Contact Group," several problematic proposals continue to dominate discussion of CFS reform, including ones that may distract focus and resources away from the country-led strategy at the heart of current USG food security approach. For example, both the G-77 and FAO Secretariat are proposing that the GPAFS be subsumed within the CFS, along with the UN High Level Task Force (HLTF) Secretariat - ideas we continue to strongly resist.

Areas of Controversy in CFS Reform Talks

¶6. (SBU) In the context of making CFS more effective and policy relevant at the global level, several controversial items have been proposed to give CFS a potentially prescriptive role across a wide array of topics. Explicit guidance is requested on the following:

- "Global Strategic Policy Framework" and GPAFS: Brazil has proposed that CFS have as its main function the creation and implementation of a single global policy similar to that

contained within the HLTF's "Comprehensive Framework for Action" (CFA) - drafted by HLTF (David Nabarro) to better coordinate efforts of its 23 UN members. Brazil and many G-77 states consider the HLTF too "New York-centric," too friendly toward Bretton Woods Institutions (e.g., World Bank), and outside the governance of UN members (where G-77 uses its voting bloc). Guidance is sought on the role of CFS in terms of the CFA or an alternative "global" policy toward food security, and the relationship between CFS and the HLTF (and Secretariat). Nabarro informed us that FAO DG Diouf, Brazil, and possibly others are working behind the scenes to dissolve the Task Force, centralize its functions within the CFS, and describe USG food security policy as inimical to G-77 interests. Similarly, there remains little understanding among members of the GPAFS, its aims, and the reasons the CFS could not serve as the coordinating body for GPAFS.

- Monitoring and Accountability: Many parties in these reform talks have encouraged CFS to assume some sort of "monitoring" function and a variety of specific suggestions have emerged. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food has suggested close monitoring of country commitments, though focused more on pledges by donors than obligations of recipients. Oxfam International is proposing that CFS monitor implementation of a

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vetted "International Public Registry of Commitments" whereby states commit to national plans for food security. Oxfam's local representative sought USG support for the idea in a meeting with USUN Rome on August 13, and noted a similar request was made in Washington recently at the National Security Council.

- Role for Civil Society, Private Sector: From the start, we have strongly supported an inclusive process to both CFS reform and the committee's work, particularly participation of the private sector, NGOs, and foundations such as Gates and Rockefeller. The G-77, however, is split on the issue, with GRULAC leading the charge to support participation by activist groups like Via Campesino and others critical of U.S. policies, and the Near East group largely opposed to NGO participation. Despite our efforts, there is little support thus far for inclusion in the reform process by the private sector and foundations and relatively little awareness on the part of these groups regarding potential CFS reform.

High Level Panel of Experts

17. (SBU) The French President during the 2008 G-8 Summit hosted by Japan proposed creation of a "High Level Panel of Experts" (HLPE) which was included in the Summit declaration on food security ("As part of this partnership, a global network of high-level experts on food and agriculture would provide science-based analysis, and highlight needs and future risks.").

The French later proposed (without coordination with G-8 colleagues) during the November 2008 FAO Conference to launch the network under FAO auspices. FAO DG Diouf subsequently wrote leaders in January proposing a specific format for such a panel, noting that it was within his constitutional rights as DG to establish an expert panel on his own. Nonetheless, France and others requested that CFS host such a panel, and that its terms of reference be included within the general CFS reform debate. Washington guidance on the CFS and HLPE (ref D) encouraged "support for the forward movement" of HLPE planning, a single global panel of experts, and refinement of the terms of reference through member consultations.

18. (SBU) Recognizing that the FAO proposal was rapidly becoming the de facto blueprint for the inclusion of an expert panel in the CFS itself, USUN Rome volunteered to serve as the Chair of a Working Group (WG-4) to craft the regular and structured inclusion of expertise in the CFS, as called for by the majority of members. Our proposal to have the CGIAR representative (Bioversity International) co-Chair WG-4 with us was rejected by France and several G-77 members, but nonetheless its Director General and Deputy DG worked closely with us to ensure the CGIAR network would play a key role in any expert panel, thereby helping to minimize duplication of efforts and maximize the neutrality of panel input. After months of careful efforts to build trust and confidence among members (particularly France, G-77, WFP and IFAD), WG-4 drafted terms of reference providing for a relatively low cost and an inclusive process focusing on a system of ad hoc rosters or "project teams" of renowned experts to provide advice to CFS members. After reviewing similar expert processes elsewhere, we sought to ensure high value added

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and policy "neutrality" in the panel's products (The FAO Member website contains details on the work of WG-4, including written inputs by member states). We would hope to see influential American experts participate in this process to ensure our interests are promoted. ACTION REQUEST: In this context, we request guidance on USG red-lines regarding the HLPE and its terms of reference agreed to by WG-4.

Comment

19. (SBU) While we continue to define the GPAFS in the context of the overall U.S. food security strategy, we should be mindful of the efforts within the CFS and particularly among developing states to keep global policies within an arena where all can participate. A consistent concern we hear in Rome from G-77 diplomats and others is that G-8 and U.S. efforts are inconsistent with a multilateral approach to food security - despite repeated assurances to the contrary. In the absence of any clear definition of what GPAFS means in practice to individual countries and regions, our efforts to build trust fall largely on deaf ears here, while others continue to shape the landscape on global food security strategies. With the commitment by the G-8 to spend 20 billion dollars on food security over the coming three years, we will have tremendous impact on shaping the agenda. We need to clearly signal the role we envisage for the CFS in the context of our global food strategy.
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